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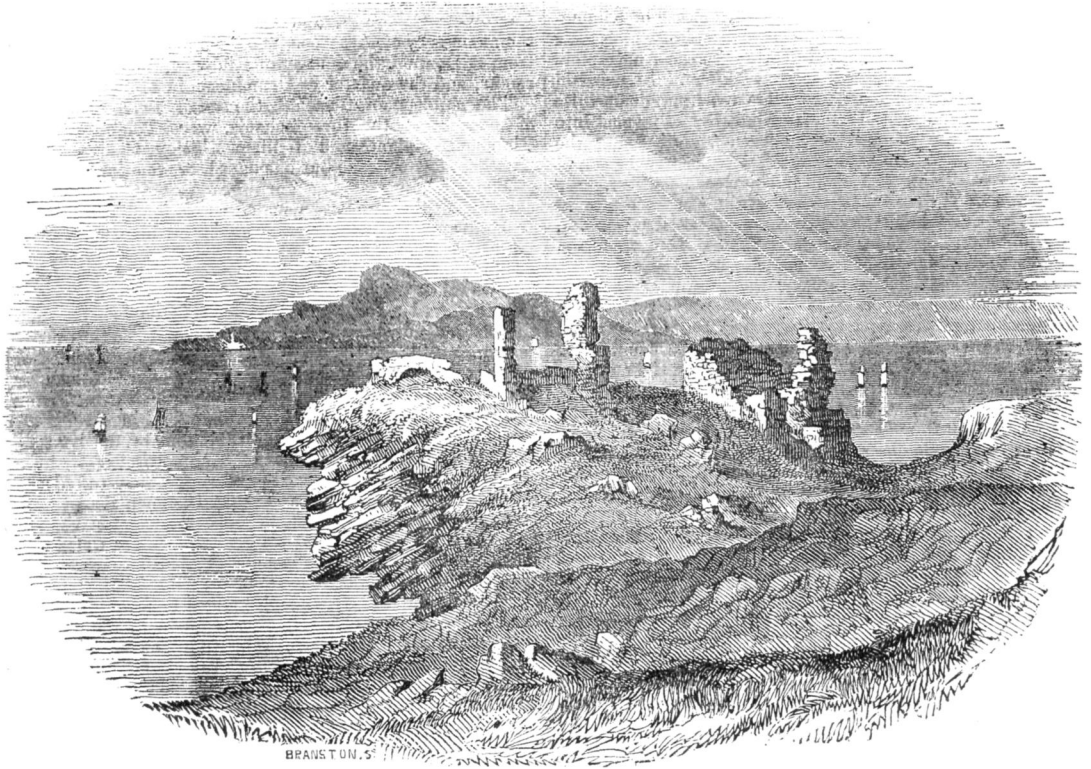
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# THE IRISH PENNY JOURNAL.

NUMBER 29.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 1841.

VOLUME I.



KILBARRON CASTLE, COUNTY OF DONEGAL.

We think our readers generally will concur with us in considering the subject of our prefixed illustration as a very striking and characteristic one—presenting features which, except among the castles of the Scottish highland chiefs, will only be found on the wild shores of our own romantic island. It is indeed a truly Irish scene—poetical and picturesque in the extreme, and its history is equally peculiar, being wholly unlike any thing that could be found relating to any castle out of Ireland.

From the singularity of its situation, seated on a lofty, precipitous, and nearly insulated cliff, exposed to the storms and billows of the western ocean, our readers will naturally conclude that this now sadly dilapidated and time-worn ruin must have owed its origin to some rude and daring chief of old, whose occupation was war and rapine, and whose thoughts were as wild and turbulent as the waves that washed his seagirt eagle dwelling; and such, in their ignorance of its unpublished history, has been the conclusion drawn by modern topographers, who tell us that it is supposed to have been the habitation of freebooters. But it was not so; and our readers will be surprised when we acquaint them that this lonely, isolated fortress was erected as an abode for peaceful men—a safe and quiet retreat in troubled times for the laborious investigators and preservers of the history, poetry, and antiquities of their country! Yes, reader, this castle was the residence of the ollaves, bards, and antiquaries of the people of Tirconnell—the illustrious family of the O'Clerys, to

whose zealous labours in the preservation of the history and antiquities of Ireland we are chiefly indebted for the information on those subjects with which we so often endeavour to instruct and amuse you. You will pardon us, then, if with a grateful feeling to those benefactors of our country to whose labours we owe so much, we endeavour to do honour to their memory by devoting a few pages of our little national work to their history, as an humble but not unfitting monument to their fame.

We trust, however, that such a sketch as we propose will not be wholly wanting either in interest or instruction. It will throw additional light upon the ancient customs and state of society in Ireland, and exhibit in a striking way a remarkable feature in the character of our countrymen of past ages, which no adverse circumstances were ever able utterly to destroy, and which, we trust, will again distinguish them as of old—their love for literature and learning, and their respect for good and learned men. It will also exhibit another trait in their national character no less peculiar or remarkable, namely, their great anxiety to preserve their family histories—a result of which is, that even to the present day the humblest Irish peasant, as well as the estates gentleman, can not unfrequently trace his descent not only to a more remote period, but also with a greater abundance of historical evidence than most of the princely families of Europe. This is, indeed, a trait in the national character which philosophers, and men like ourselves, usually affect

to hold in contempt. But no species of knowledge should be despised; and the desire to penetrate the dim obscurities of time in search of our origin, as well as to speculate upon our future prospects, is one of the characteristics which distinguish the human from the lower animals of creation, and without which we should have little to boast of over them.

The family of O'Clery, or, as the name is now usually written, Cleary, and sometimes anglicized Clarke, is not of Tircconnellian origin, nor of very ancient standing in the country of the Kinel-Connell race, the present county of Donegal. Their original locality was in Hy-Fiachrach-Aidhne, a district comprising the entire of the present diocese of Kilmacduagh, in the present county of Galway, and of which their ancestors were, for a long period previous to the Anglo-Norman conquest, the hereditary lords or kings. As usual in ancient Irish topographical names, this territory derived its appellation from that of the tribe by whom it was formed into a principality, the name Hy-Fiachrach-Aidhne being the tribe name of the descendants of Fiachra, who was the son of Eochy-Moyvaine, King of Ireland in the fourth century. On the adoption of surnames, however, at the close of the tenth century, this tribe having split into several distinct families, assumed different surnames from their immediate progenitors, and of these families the most eminent were the O'Clerys, the O'Heynes, the O'Shaughnessys, the Mac Giolla Kellys, and the O'Moghans.

The occasion of the first settlement of the O'Clerys at Kilbarron, in the country of Tircconnell, will be best told in the simple statement of his descendants, as given in their genealogical work.

"The English power, that is to say, the power of the Burkes descended from William (Fitz) Adelme the Conqueror, having become in the descendant over the descendants of Eochy Breac, the son of Dathi, the son of Fiachra, &c. several of the latter were separated, and dispersed into various districts, viz, Mac Giolla Kelly went into Western Erris, and a branch of the O'Clerys into Hy-awley Mac Fiachrach. Another branch of them passed into [East] Munster, and settled in the vicinity of Kilkenny, and another again passed into Breifney O'Reilly, and are there known as the Clan Clery.

After a lapse of time, a wise and intelligent man of the O'Clerys went from Tir-awley into Tircconnell. Cormac O'Clery was his name, and he was a proficient in both the laws, that is, the civil and the canon law. The monks and learned men of the monastery of St Bernard, called Assaroe (near Ballyshannon), conceived a great respect and affection for him, on account of his councils, his good morals, his wisdom, and his intellect, and they detained him among them for a time. He was at this period young and comely.

For a long time previously, O'Sgingin had been the ollave [chief historian] to the lord of the Kinel-Connell, that is, the O'Donnell; and it was from Ard-Carne in Moy-Lurg of the Dagda that he came into Tircconnell.

When the Cormac O'Clery of whom we have spoken came into Tircconnell, Niall Garbh, the son of Hugh, the son of Donnell Oge, was lord of the country; and O'Sgingin, that is, Matthew, was ollave to him at the time; and there did not then live of children with O'Sgingin, nor yet of his tribe, but an only and beautiful daughter. And this daughter O'Sgingin gave as wife to this Cormac, and all he demanded for her as a dower\* was, that if ever a son should be born to them, he should be trained up in the knowledge of literature and history, as his own family were all extinct in that country except this only daughter. Cormac promised to fulfil this request, and he did so.

A son was born of Cormac and O'Sgingin's daughter, and he was named Giolla Brighde, in honour and remembrance of Giolla Brighde O'Sgingin, his maternal uncle, who was the intended ollave of Tircconnell, but had died some time before, in the year 1382.

Son to that Giolla Brighde O'Clery was Giolla Riabhach; and son to Giolla Riabhach was Dermot of the three schools, so called because he kept a school for literature, a school for history, and a school for poetry. It was to that Dermot that O'Donnell, that is, Niall, the son of Turlogh an

\* *Tinascra*, in the original—a reward, portion, or dowry—it being the custom among the Irish as among the Eastern nations, that the husband should make a present to his wife's father, or to herself, upon his marriage. As Byron says—

"Though this seems odd  
'Tis true; the reason is, that the bashaw  
Must make a present to his sire-in-law,"

fhiona, gave the territory called Creevagh, which was his principal residence for a time, and which was given him in addition to other lands which O'Donnell's ancestors had previously given to O'Sgingin, in reward for his skill in the science which was hereditary to him, namely, history.

Son to Dermot of the three schools was Teige Cam, who had the three celebrated sons, Tuathal, Gillareagh, and Dermot. It was by them that the stone houses were built in Kilbarron; for they and their ancestors were the occupants of Kilbarron since the time of Cormac already mentioned, who came first to Tircconnell; and they were also the occupants of Carrow-na-Caheragh, and Carrownty-clogh of the lands of the monastery of Assaroe. To them also belonged (as a gift) from O'Donnell, the quarter of Kildoney, the quarter of Coolremur, and the quarter of Druminerin in Moy-Enné.

The children of Tuathal, the son of Teige Cam, the son of Dermot of the three schools, were Teige Cam, Giolla Riabhach, Mahon, and William. Teige Cam (the son of Tuathal) left no issue but one daughter, Sheela."

The preceding extract furnishes us with a very striking evidence of the regard anciently entertained for learning in Ireland, and of the liberal endowments made for the support of its professors. The lands named as belonging to the ollaves of Tircconnell are still known by the appellations above given, and would at the present day produce a rental little short of two thousand a-year. Ah! it will be long till learning in the history and literature of our country be again thus nobly recompensed! But it may be asked, were these professors of old worthy of the liberal patronage thus afforded them—were they mindful of the duties imposed upon them in return for it? We answer, that we think they were, and in support of our opinion we adduce the following brief but expressive tributes to their memories as recorded by our Annalists:—

"1492. O'Clery, that is, Teige Cam (or the crooked), ollave to O'Donnell in science, poetry, and history, a man who had maintained a house of universal hospitality for the mighty and the needy, died, after having subdued the world and the devil."

"1512. Tuathal O'Clery, the son of Teige Cam, a man learned in history and poetry—a man who kept a house of hospitality generally for rich and poor, died."

"1522. This year was killed, besides two of the poets of O'Donnell, Dermot, the son of Teige Cam O'Clery, a man learned in history and poetry—a man who kept a house of hospitality universally for the rich and the poor."

"1527. O'Clery, that is, Giolla Riabhach, the son of Teige Cam, learned in the sciences, in historical knowledge, in poetry, and in theological reading, a man respected and rich, died."

1583. In this year Turlogh Luineach O'Neal, having attacked O'Donnell at Drumleen, in revenge of the burning of Strabane by the latter some time previously, he was defeated by O'Donnell with great loss, and amongst the slain was "Maelmurry (the son of Dermot, who was son of Mahon, who was son of Tuathal) O'Clery, the only hostage of O'Neill and the Kenel-Owen, for his father and O'Neill himself had been born of the same mother. Maelmurry, on account of his relationship with O'Neill, had been in possession of all O'Neill's wealth, and O'Neill would have given three times the usual quantity of every kind of property for his ransom, if ransomed he could have been; but he was first mortally wounded and afterwards drowned by O'Donnell's people, who were in high spirits, and rejoiced greatly at seeing him thus cut off."

"1585. Cosnamhach, the son of Cucogry (or Peregrine), who was the son of Dermot, who was the son of Teige Cam O'Clery—a rich and flourishing man, who had maintained a house of hospitality at one time in Thomond and another in Tircconnell, died at Fuar-Chosach in Tircconnell, in the lent of this year, and was interred under the asylum of God and St Bernard, in the monastery of Assaroe."

This devotion to literature was not, however, a characteristic of the O'Clerys in their days of wealth and prosperity only, but distinguished them with even greater lustre when reduced to poverty in after times, as will clearly appear from the facts we have yet to adduce. But as we are sketching their genealogical history, as well as their character, we must previously continue their pedigree from the period of their settlement at Kilbarron, to their extinction as professional ollaves, on the ruin of their patrons the O'Donnells, and, for the sake of clearness, we shall give it in a tabular form.

1. Cormac O'Clery, the first who settled in Donegal,

2. Giolla Brighde O'Clery.
3. Giolla Riabhach O'Clery.
4. Dermot of the three schools.
5. Teige Cam (or the stooped) O'Clery.
6. Dermot O'Clery.
7. Cucogry (or Peregrine) O'Clery.
8. Mac Con O'Clery; his brother, Cosnamach, died in 1584.

9. Lughaidh (or Lewis) Giolla Brighde, Mac Con Meirgeach, Cucogry, and Duigen O'Clery.

Of these sons, the eldest, Lughaidh, was the most distinguished of the Irish literati of the northern half of Ireland in his time, and the principal poetical combatant on the part of the northern bards in the contest with those of the southern division, which took place about the commencement of the seventeenth century, respecting the claims of the rival dynasties of the northern and southern divisions of Ireland to supremacy and renown. The poems written on this occasion are usually collected into a volume, entitled "*Iomradh*," or, Contention of the Bards, and were long popular among the Irish people. He was also the compiler of *Annals of his Own Times*, which the Four Masters used in their great compilations. As chief of his sept, this Lughaidh, or Lewis O'Clery, held the entire of the lands bestowed on his ancestors, as well as the herenach lands of the parish of Kilbarron, as hereditary herenach, till the flight of the northern earls in 1607, when they were lost to him and his family in the general confiscation which followed, and became the property of the Lord Polliott and the Bishop of Raphoe. He held those lands, however, till the close of the year 1609, and was selected as one of the "good and lawful men" of the county, appointed in obedience to a commission to inquire into the king's title to the several escheated and forfeited lands in Ulster, and which held an inquisition for this purpose at Lifford, on the 12th of September 1609. In this inquisition, which furnishes the most valuable information upon the nature of ancient Irish tenures, it is stated that "the parish of Kilbarron contains five quarters in all, whereof one quarter is herenach land possessed by the sept of the Cleries as herenaches, paying thereout yearlie to the lord busshopp of Raphoe thirteen shillings four pence Irish per annum, six meathers of butter, and thirty-four meathers of meale; and that there is one quarter named Kildoned, in the tenure of the said sept of the Cleries, free from any tithes to the busshopp," &c. And again, "That there are in the said parishe three quarters of Collumkillies land, everie quarter conteyninge sixe balliboes in the tenure of Lewe O'Clerie, to whom the said lands were sithence mortgaged for fortie pounds, by the said late Earle of Tirconnell unto the said Lewe, who hath paid thereout yearly unto his Majestie, since the late earl's departure, four pounds, two muttons, and a pair of gloves, but nothing to the said busshopp."

Cucogry, or Peregrine O'Clery, the son of Lughaidh or Lewy, and chief of the name, held the half quarter of the lands of Coobeg and Dowghill, in the proportion of Monargane, in the barony of Boyleagh and Bannagh, from hollandtide 1631 until May 1632, for which he paid eight pounds sterling per annum to William Farrell, Esq., assignee to the Earl of Annandale, as appears from an inquisition taken at Lifford on the 25th of May 1632, but "being a mere Irishman, and not of English or British descent or surname," he was dispossessed, and the lands became forfeited to the king.

The O'Clerys were thus wholly reduced to poverty, but not to idleness, in the service of their country's literature. It was in this year 1632 that they commenced that series of works devoted to the preservation of Irish history, which has made their names so illustrious, and of which the celebrated annals, called the *Annals of the Four Masters*, are now the most popularly known. A full account of this great work, written by the author of this article, will be found in the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, and reprinted in the first volume of the *Dublin Penny Journal*. The persons concerned in its compilation were, first, Teige of the Mountain O'Clery, who, after becoming a Franciscan friar, adopted the name of Michael, 2 Maurice O'Mulconary; 3 Fergus O'Mulconary; 4 Cucogry, the son of Lewy O'Clery; 5 Cucogry O'Duigen; 6 Conary O'Clery, the brother of Michael. The work was commenced in the monastery of Donegal, of which Father Bernardin O'Clery was guardian, on the 22d of January 1632, and finished in the same convent on the 10th of August 1636, the brotherhood supplying the transcribers with the necessary support.

The motives which actuated the O'Clerys to enter on a work of such labour as this, are very feelingly and prophetically expressed in the dedication to it by Michael, the superintendent of the work. "Judging that should such a compilation be neglected at present, or consigned to a future time, a risk might be run that the materials for it should never again be brought together,"—and such indeed would have been their fate. In the same spirit the O'Clerys compiled their *Leabhar Gabhala*, or book of the conquests of Ireland, containing the most valuable ancient historical poems preserved in the language; their book of Genealogies; their *Reim riograidhe*, or catalogue of kings; and their calendar and genealogies of the Saints or distinguished ecclesiastics of Ireland. In addition to these, Cucogry, the son of Lewy, wrote the *Life of Red Hugh O'Donnell*, a work of the greatest value and interest. Copies of all these works are now preserved in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, and with the exception of two of them, are in the autograph of Cucogry O'Clery, the best scribe of the family, or of the Four Masters conjointly.

The preservation of these remains, so essential to our history, is very interestingly connected with the subsequent fortunes of the O'Clery family.

Towards the close of the fatal troubles of the seventeenth century, the O'Clerys, with many other families of Tirconnell, were forced to seek shelter in the wilds of Erris, in Mayo, under the guidance of their natural leader Roger O'Donnell, the son of Colonel Manus O'Donnell, who was killed at Dungannon in 1646, and ancestor to the present Sir Richard O'Donnell of Newport. Of these O'Clerys, was Cucogry, one of the Four Masters, and senior representative of the name, who, carrying with him his books as his chief treasure, bequeathed them to his two sons Dermot and John. How strong this feeling of pride in his books, and his love of learning, continued in the midst of adversities, and even in death, will appear from the following extract from his autograph will, which was made at Curr-na-heilté, near Newport, and which is preserved in one of his works now in the library of the Academy. It is the first or principal item among his bequests:—"I bequeath the property most dear to me that ever I possessed in this world, namely, my books, to my two sons Dermot and Shane (or John.) Let them extract from them, without injuring them, whatever may be necessary to their purpose, and let them be equally seen and used by the children of my brother Cairbre as by themselves; and let them instruct them according to the (obliterated.) And I request the children of Cairbre to teach and instruct their children. And I command my sons to be loving, friendly, and kind to the children of Cairbre, and to their own children, if they wish that God should befriend them in the other world, or prosper them in this, and give them the inheritance of heaven."

The injunctions thus solemnly laid on his posterity were faithfully fulfilled. His books were carefully preserved and studied by his descendants from generation to generation, till, being brought to Dublin about thirty years since, by John O'Clery, the eldest representative of his line, they got into the possession of the late Edward O'Reilly, at the sale of whose books and Irish MSS. they were purchased for the Royal Irish Academy.

This John O'Clery, who still lives, is the fifth in descent from Cucogry, the annalist, who died in 1664; and, like his ancestors, he is a good Irish scribe and scholar. We may also remark, that, though in very humble life, he can boast of a pedigree unbroken through fifty-two generations, from Eochy-Moyvaine, monarch of Ireland in the fourth century, and this on historical evidence that the learned could hardly venture to question.

To these notices we have only to add, in reference to the subject of our illustration, that though, from the account which we have already given from the O'Clery MS. it might be supposed that Kilbarron Castle was erected by them in the sixteenth century, the castle itself bears evidences in many parts that it is of much earlier antiquity. The tradition of the country, as stated by the author of the *Donegal Statistical Survey*, is, that it was originally erected by O'Sginneen or Sgingin; and this tradition is fully verified by an entry in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, which states that Kilbarron Castle was raised to the ground by Donnell, the son of Murtoigh O'Connor, in 1390. The probability, therefore, is, that it was re-edified immediately afterwards by Cormac O'Clery, though houses of stone were not erected within its enclosures till a later period.